

Australian Pratincole (*Stiltia isabella*)

The pratincole has only recently been recorded from Western Australia, south of the Kimberley. Serventy (1956) saw the birds at Koonalda approximately 60 miles east of the State border and suggested its probable occurrence further to the West. J. R. Ford (1960) later saw it near Rocbourne. My brother, L. H. C. Jenkins observed pratincoles at Mileura Station near Meekatharra in June and July, 1947. The birds were noted on bare plain country and their characteristic swallow-like form and flight were clearly seen. Unfortunately the significance of the observation was not realised at the time and specimens were not procured. In view of the recent sightings, however, this record is worth reporting, if for no other purpose than to alert other observers.

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IRRUPTION OF THE WHITE-WINGED BLACK TERN INTO THE SOUTH-WEST, 1960

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The White-winged Black Tern (*Chlidonias leucoptera*) is a Palaearctic breeding species which during the northern winter moves into the tropical belt of the Ethiopian, Oriental and Australasian regions. Recent observations indicate that the species is not uncommon in coastal northern Australia during this period; L. Amiet (*The Emu*, 56, 1956: 95; 57, 1957: 55) and F. M. Hamilton (*The Emu*, 57, 1957: 147) observed the species in fairly large numbers along the Queensland coast, and D. L. Serventy (*W.A. Naturalist*, 1, 1947: 68) and P. Slater (*W.A. Naturalist*, 7, 1959: 39) recorded it in northern Western Australia. Occasionally as the result of cyclonic phenomena, the species is transported many hundreds of miles further south. Three such invasions into the South-West have been reported, viz. in 1917 (W. B. Alexander, *The Emu*, 17, 1917: 95), 1918 (W. B. Alexander, *The Emu*, 18, 1918: 134) and in 1956 (A. M. Douglas *et al.*, *W.A. Naturalist*, 5, 1956: 121). A further irruption into the South-West is now reported.

On about March 20, 1960, a tropical cyclone developed near Cape York, Queensland, and then moved westwards across the Gulf of Carpentaria and the Northern Territory, and intensified off the Kimberley and North-West coasts from March 23 to 25. It then travelled rapidly southwards along the west coast and passed the

latitude of Perth on the west side of Rottnest Island on March 27, causing heavy precipitation and gale force northerly winds. Because the cyclone followed a route down the west coast somewhat similar to that taken by the cyclone of March 1956 (J. Gentilli, *W.A. Naturalist*, 5, 1956: 84, 135), conditions were favourable for the fortuitous transportation of the White-winged Black Tern. When I visited the coastal lakes south of the Swan River in the late afternoon of March 27, the following census of the tern-species was taken: Coolbellup Lake, 4; Bibra Lake, 4; Yangebup Lake, nil; Jilbup Lake, 1; Cooloongup Lake, 10; and Walyungup Lake, 17.

The following day another survey was made and 3 birds were seen at Monger's Lake, 7 at Coolbellup Lake, and none at Perry's and Herdsman's Lakes and Lucky Bay. On March 29, I saw 13 at Bibra Lake and 4 at Cooloongup Lake, but none at Coolbellup, Yangebup, Jilbup, Coogee, Richmond and Walyungup Lakes and the Mandurah estuary. H. Atkinson saw 21 at Coolbellup Lake on March 29. The lakes and swamps between Perth and Yanchep were surveyed on March 30, but no White-winged Black Terns were seen. On April 3, P. Fuller and I saw 8 birds at Bibra Lake.

Compared with the previous invasion, the 1960 irruption was on a considerably smaller scale and birds were garbed in a more advanced stage of the nuptial plumage. They mostly had the breast and throat dappled black; head with varying amounts of black; small amounts of black on the back; wing-linings, black; upper wings, grey; tips of primaries, dark grey; tail, white above and below; beak, black. A few terns had no black except on the nape. No moulting of the wing feathers was noted.

Their flight was a fluttering action, and periodically they would swoop down and pick up food from the surface of the water. They usually fed against the wind and kept reworking the same strip over the water.

I am indebted to Mr. R. Vollprecht of the Perth Weather Bureau for allowing me to examine climatic data on the movement of the cyclone of March 1960.

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Aquatic Plants from Mingenew.—On a trip to Mingenew in October, 1959 to collect aquatic plants members of the Fresh Water Group examined a clay pan about forty feet in diameter, which yielded the following nine species of aquatics—*Lepilaena australis*, *Glossostigma drummondii*, *Damasonium minus*, *Callitriche verna*, *Crassula recurva*, *Ottelia ovalifolia*, *Marsilea brownii*, *Isoetes drummondii*, *Chara australis*.

This collection is a notably varied one for a small swamp when compared with collections which have been made from swamps in the vicinity of Perth.

—J. KNIGHT and G. G. SMITH.